

BATTLE OF BARTOW - October 3, 1861

There were three battles known as the battles of the Greenbrier Ford, which took place at Travelers Repose, now known as Bartow. One was October 3, 1861, one Oct. 31, 1861, the other Dec. 12, 1861. Since the first of these battles, the one of October 3, was the biggest one, that is the one we shall consider in this report.

The first year of the war saw five battles in the Upper Tract, as upper Pocahontas was usually called at that time. The reason being that the Staunton and Parkersburg Turnpike crossed the Greenbrier Valley at this place and it was one of the most important thoroughfares in the nation at the outbreak of the Civil War. It was well served by stage coach lines and it formed a favorite route for persons from the middle west who wished to go to Washington and other eastern points.

The political significance of Western Virginia seceding from Virginia made the passage of the Allegheney the most important spots to the military operations on both sides.

The Federal army had already occupied Tygarts Valley in Randolph, and the Confederates hurried armies into the Greenbrier Valley in Pocahontas. Their foremost post was at Travelers Repose. The camp was called Camp Bartow in honor of Col Francis S. Bartow of the 7th Georgia Regiment who was killed in the battle of Bull Run in July 1861. The camp was commanded by Gen. H. R. Jackson of Georgia, who no doubt named it in honor of his friend.

Since the building of a small town on this old battle field, the postoffice once known as Travelers Repose was changed to Bartow.

The Federal Army was camped at White's Top of Shavers Cheat at an elevation of about 4,200 feet. About 20 miles east of them on the top of the main Allegheny was camped the Confederates at an elevation of about 4,100 feet. The new soldiers were trained in sight of each other on these high tops. They lay there for months in sight of each other, and during that time had had but one skirmish. That was when the Confederates had attempted to cross Cheat at night and had gotten lost.

*me shell fortification which  
are still plainly seen.*

Juanita S. Dilley  
Pocahontas Co.  
Chapter 4, Section 4b-3  
Battle of Bartow

Camp Bartow was at the foot of the mountains. All three on the Staunton & Parkersburg Turnpike. The Yeagers, Arbogasts, Slavens, Burners and Houchins who owned this section of the county were all secessionists. In fact there was hardly a Union man in the whole of Greenbank District. No where in the mountains were the Confederate States more solidly supported.

Gen. Reynolds at Whites Top had on Sept. 13, protected the left flank of the army at Elkwater, and he had kept Loring from passing so he decided to do some passing himself. He decided that he would march an army over and surround and subdue Staunton. He ordered his men to prepare four days rations each, and on the morning of Oct. 3, 1861 at one o'clock A. M. he put his forces in motion and they marched down the mountain to Durbin. He had about 5,000 troops and 6 batteries of big guns. His forces were: Howes' Battery, Loomis' Battery, Michigan Volunteer Battery, Daums' Battery, Virginia Volunteer Artillery.

24th, 25th, and 32 Ohio Regiments 7th, 9th, 13th, 14th, 15th, and 17th Indiana Reg. of Infantry. Robinsons Ohio Cavalry. Greenfield Pennsylvania Cavalry, Brackman's Indiana Cavalry.

Opposed to them were the Third Arkansas, First Georgia, Twelfth Georgia, Twenty-third Virginia, Rices Battery, Schumakers Battery, and the 31st Virginian of which Captain J. C. Arbogasts Greenbank Company was made up of local people (Hope to have a complete list of this Co. soon)

The Federals got to Durbin about sun up and saw an advance guard under Col. Edward Johnson in front of them in or above the narrows which separates Frank from Durbin. They set up a cannon or two and fired at them. Johnson fell back and the Federals marched up the road and through the fields. Johnson had his horse shot and killed in this engagement. He held the column up for an hour and it was not until six cannon had opened on him and a flanking movement started to his right that he retired to the main works at Camp Bartow.

*me these fortification which  
are still plainly seen!*

The Federal army placed two batteries in front of the Confederate breastworks. These batteries were 6 guns in the meadow about half way from the Burner house to the East Fork and 2 guns on the other side of the turnpike. The Confederate batteries were on a low hill just behind Travelers Repose, where there are embankments still plainly to be seen.

In addition Lieutenant Wooding placed a gun on the Turnpike directly in front of Travelers Repose, from which he fired 90 rounds that day point-blank at the enemy across the river bottom. The big guns kept up a steady firing from seven in the morning until 2:30 in the afternoon. A rifle cannon the Confederates expected to do great damage was a disappointment for after the first few rounds the ball stuck and could not be dislodged until Sergt. Timothy H. Stamps could get there from Monterey. There was more powder burned in the big guns that day than at any other battle in the mountains. It was a great day for noise.

But all this cannon firing was meant to cover up infantry work. It will be remembered that the turnpike is an east and west road and that there is a north and south road paralleling the river. This Huntersville road comes to the turnpike at Travelers Repose.

Gen. Reynolds proceeded to send infantry against both ends of the Confederate breastworks. It looks like one could hardly call it a flanking movement for these detachments did not attempt to swing in wide circles. It was the plan to let the artillery keep everything hot along the turnpike, while his forces were to attack both ends of the Confederate position.

Jackson evidently expected a wide flung encirclement for he had sent Johnson up the river for more than a mile, and he was clear above the place that the Federals attempted to cross.

Jackson entrusted the defense of his left (down the river) to Colonel Rust and his Arkansas troops. It will be remembered that the Federals had a right large order in that they had to charge across wide open fields, ford the river and climb a steep hill to take a fortified camp.

*the shell fortification which  
we still see*

Rust marched down the road toward Greenbank until he had drawn away from the river and was on an elevation overlooking the river. He then marched by the end of the breastworks and took a station between the river and the breastworks, but before he could form his men, the Federal batteries commenced a rapid fire, and a regiment of infantry left the road at the Burner homestead and marched across the meadow; waded the river and climbed the hill. The Arkansas troops, however, met them at the crest of the hill and the regiment of infantry went back and marched up the hill on the other side of the road. This movement of the Federal troops moving first to the right, then to the left, puzzled the Arkansas commander. There seemed to be a discussion as to what the orders were. I was warned afterwards that there had been a misunderstanding of orders.

Col. Richardson saying. "My regiment is to attack on my right." "Not at all", said Col. Wilder, "You are to attack the enemys right". This confusion of orders marked the turning point of the battle. Now both regiments were in the same place, and it therefore permitted the whole power of the Confederate artillery to be directed to one place. The federals could not face the fire and retreated in great confusion. Both regiments went into the woods at the north of the turnpike and added to the confusion already in that quarter.

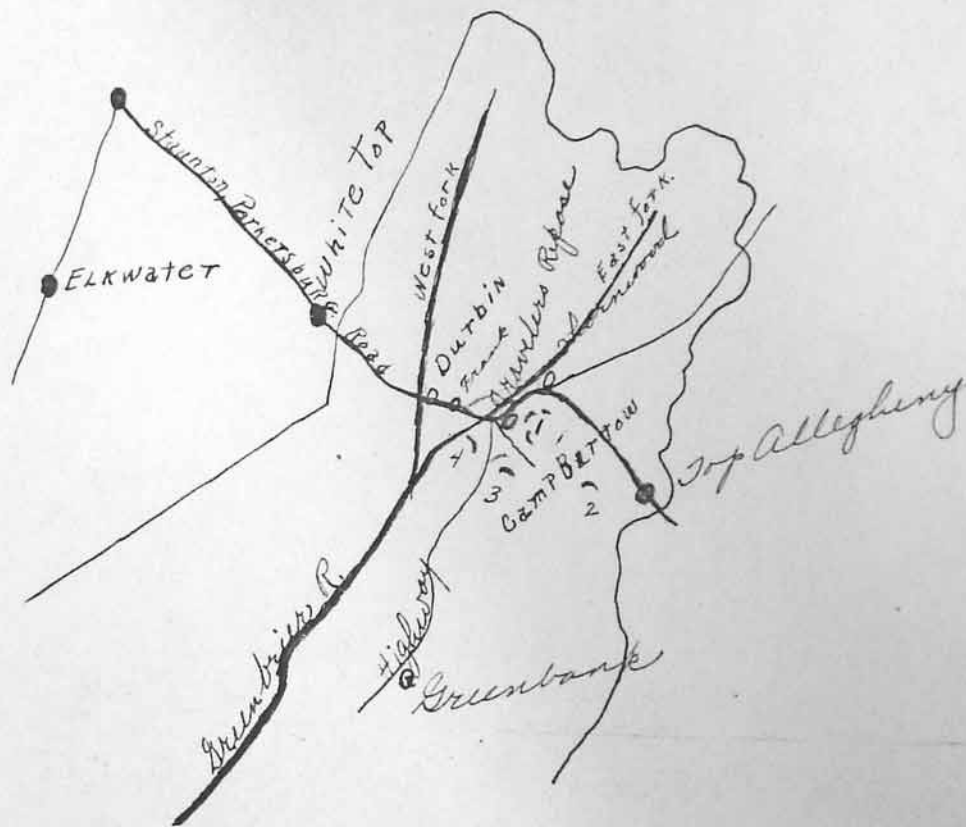
The Confederates called this one of the greatest victories of that year. The Federals called it a reconissance in force.

Loss in killed and wounded, Federals 43, Confederates 52, including 13 missing. The Federals lost one stand of colors.



Beaumont Co.  
Division 4 b-3

Granita S. Dilley  
Clover Lick, Va.  
Feb. 28, 1940



Field from where the  
Federals fought.

- Union fortifications
- Confederate fortifications
- ~ Fortifications as they  
were placed on hills  
1, 2, 3, 4, facing  
the turnpike. I was  
up there one day last week,  
and Mr. Beard, who now  
owns Travelers Rest, showed  
me these fortifications, which  
are still plainly seen.

CIVIL WAR

Juanita Dilley  
Clover Lick  
Pocahontas County

CIVIL WAR

Captain J. W. Mathews served in the war between the states. He had always expressed a desire to be buried in a Confederate Uniform and according to his wish his body was drawn to the grave in a two-horse wagon. He was born in Pocahontas County in 1839 and at the age of 21 he enlisted as a private in Co. 125th Virginia Infantry and saw service in many of the historic battles of the Civil War. He was one of the so-called prisoner of war in Charleston S. C. been placed with a number of others, about 600 between the Federal defense and the attacking Confederates, and being exposed to the firing of this attacking army. Fortunately the danger of the prisoners was discovered in time to avert any casualties. He died in Greenbrier County in 1930.

Wednesday Oct. 10, 1934 Mathew John McNeel celebrated this nineteenth birthday at the old McNeel homestead where there has a John McNeel resided since 1768. At the age of seventeen he entered the Civil War and saw arduous and honorable service. He is the last remaining member of Captain W. L. Mcneels' Company of soldiers. -----Pocahontas Times

No where in the mountains were the Confederate States more solidly supported then in the Greenbank community in fact there was hardly a Union man found in the whole community. The first year of the war 1861, Confederate Veterans Company "G" of the Virginia 31st Regiment mustered in the service 53 all volunteers. In the second year of the war company G had 120 soldiers, all six feet tall except James Hughes and Robert Wolfenbarger, practically all from the Greenbank District. Company G. was of the famous 31st Regiment of the 4th Brigade of Stonewall Jacksons Corps and Army under the command of Robert E. Lee. The Union soldiers admitted that they could always tell when they had to confront the 31st Regiment of Stonewall's Brigade, due to the fact that the impace was always stubborn and irresistible.

It will be remembered that the main battle of Braxton was fought on Oct. 3, 1861 and that the Confederate army fell back to the Top Allegheny, and went to building cabins for the winter, and fortifying and building batteries.

The idea of the Confederates in moving to the Top Allegheny was to prevent an army from marching in behind them by the way of the North Fork road, and the Greenbank Mountain road. Pickets were placed down the Greenbank road, and on the North Fork road. The pickets on the North Fork road decided to blockade it, to be sure that the enemy could not get in the rear, and company G was on the detail to pilot a company of soldiers down on the North Fork with the instructions to blockade it in such a tangle that it would take a year or more to cut it out. The soldiers cut down the mannoth hemlock across the road for about four miles. The soldiers said that it was the largest blockade in the war. After the war it took the road hands about two years to cut it out of the road, and each man working about four days. The Greenbank mountain road was also blockaded.

It was in the engagement on Top Allegheny that the old Confederates soldiers, William Slayton was wounded and crept off in the bush to die, but was found two days later by his comrades who were searching for missing soldiers. Their attention was attracted to the place of some one singing a good old hymn. When found, they were told he though he would sing a hymn before he died, but he recovered and lived many years.

It will be remembered that the home of John Yeager was in the center of the battle field. We have it from Mrs. Rachel Sutton, who at that time was staying with her uncle, John Yeager and Mr. J. D. Beard, a daughter of John Yeager, that they were awakened in the morning before daylight by the loud talking of the soldiers. They were getting ready for battle, and were filling the breastworks just back of the Yeager house. When the bullets began falling on the house like hail.

The Confederate General ordered the inmates to vacate the house, the Yeager family moved out. When they came back, after the battle, they found the house riddled with bullets, one corner was badly damaged by a cannon ball and house was filled with wounded soldiers. The upstairs was used for a hospital for many days, and many of the soldiers died in the house.

The retreat of the Union forces after the battle was known as "Slaytons Retreat" and led to the composition of the old violin tune of the same name, which was composed by two Confederates soldiers, George B. Sutton and Robert Wolfenbarger, who said they heard him trying to give the command to retreat, but couldn't say anything for stammering. It was reported afterwards, that the delay of the Union army, and failing to make the attack in the rear at the proper time was due to the fact that they found a barrel or two of good cider at the Nottingham home and wouldn't march a step until it was all consumed and their canteens filled. The unreasonable thing about the official reports of the battle of Top Allegheny is that perhaps 2000 soldiers on each side would stand and shoot at each other from daylight until 2:30 and only 20 killed on each side. But it will be remembered that the boys of the Blue and the Gray" who fought were amateurs in the art of warfare, and had not yet been drilled, and had not learned the military tactics of Jackson, Lee, and Grant. The shooting must have been at random, for the lumber company who cut the timber in that section found a number of trees half cut down by the cannon balls, these trees were said to be entirely out of the line of battle.

From: Pocahontas Times  
from a history of Greenbank  
written in 1934 by R. W. Brown  
of Greenbank and pub. in the  
times.



The experience of a soldier at the battle of Droop Mountain in 1863. A foot soldier marching through to take his stand at Droop Mountain passed near his home and his folks presented him with a fine boiled ham, which he placed in a knapsack and carried some twenty odd miles on a forced march to the battlefield where he had a few hours rest and was than envolved in the battle. The Confederates retreated and marched until late at night when they called a halt just outside of Lewisburg. This soldier in 24 hours had walked over 50 miles and had fought a battle. Being ready for refreshments, he looked for his ham and found that there was nothing but a rock. Just before the battle, while he was taking a nap, some comrade had stolen his ham and replaced it with a rock weighing bout the same number of pounds. It was this stone he had been defending against onslaught and which he had carried all these weary miles.

Pocahontas Times.

William Young Sr. of Stony Creek who had neighbors fighting on both sides. Also many relatives and friends, attempted strict neutrality. For this he was made a victim of local animosities. He had some skill as a physician, and it became customary for the neighbors to call for his help during the dreadful epidemic of diptheria and other camp diseases which swept the county during the war. It was while answering a call of mercy to a family living on Sevego that he was met at the Griffin place by a party of Confederate sympathizers and soldiers and put under arrest. He was first confined in the jail at Huntersville, thence conveyed favor, kinsman, the late Levi Gay, a Confederate soldier, was allowed to take him to Highland. Mr Young sickened and died during that same year in Libby Prison in Richmond. His end was no doubt hastened by worry and grief over unjust imprisonment, as much as by necessary hardship endured by a prisoner of war, removed from the free environment of his beloved mountain country. He was by principle anti-slavery, and therefore classed as pro-federal.

Pocahontas Times  
Aug. 8, 1918. Norman Price.